

CAVALCADE OF COUNTIES: CREAM ON TOP



Sussex County's 106-year-old County Court House, in the center of Newton, is a well-known landmark. The first building was built in 1756

SOMEHOW Sussex County's position at the very top of New Jersey and its standing as the state's leading dairy county fit easily together, almost as if the cream of New Jersey has risen to the top—even as it does in a bottle of Sussex milk.

Obviously, Sussex has no monopoly on natural beauty—but it can boast of a major share of mountain scenery, lakes and state forests and parks. Sussex has the highest point in Jersey and a share in Lake Hopatcong, Jersey's biggest lake. Scenically, there's no denying Sussex has a high cream content. Literally the county has a high cream content, too; Sussex has long been regarded as the state's prime milk county.

Still, the rich farm potential and the mountain scenery had nothing to do with luring Dutchmen down from what is now Kingston, N. Y., in the 1640s. Had agriculture been on their minds these Hollanders likely would have ignored Sussex—anything not flat like their homeland didn't overly interest Dutch farmers.

But these newcomers weren't farmers; they were restless adventurers seeking gold in the tree-covered mountains—and by 1645 they had followed the range all the way down to near the Delaware Water Gap. There they found copper, possibly as early as

Sussex County's Bicentennial Finds Much of Famed Dairy-and-Vacationland Unchanged Since Founding

BY JOHN T. CUNNINGHAM

1640, definitely by 1657. They took the copper back along the mountains and as they went they developed the first road in the United States, a 140-mile thoroughfare linking the Pahaquarry copper mine with Esopus (now Kingston).

NO Indian trouble developed, even though these tree-covered mountains had long been the location of Kittatinny, the Lenni-Lenape "chief town." Other Dutch and French Huguenots from Esopus also came down the old mine road, some remaining in the valley to plant crops along the Delaware, others climbing over the mountain to the flat marshy "Drowned Lands" where the sluggish Wallkill River overflowed its banks near the New York border.

English, Irish and Scotch emigrants came overland soon after 1700 to the Kittatinny slopes, which they called "Blue" Mountains. Col. Thomas De Kay exchanged 60 acres of land in lower Manhattan for 1,200 acres along Hamburg Mountain—a rather neat bargain (for 1724). Germans came up from Philadelphia in the 1740s, led by John Peter Bernhardt and Caspar Shafer, and settled along the Tockhokkonetkong River (now called the less jaw-cracking Paulins Kill).

So while many knew of the lands near the Blue Mountains, Philadelphia leaders heard to their astonishment in 1730 that people lived west of the mountains—and without getting English permission at that! Up the Delaware River went Nicholas Scull, famed

English surveyor, and John Lukens, chain-bearer, to investigate.

Sure enough, there on the fertile lands by the Delaware they found many Hollanders. Samuel Dupui, their leader, welcomed Scull and Lukens (who marveled at the orchards—"greater than any in Philadelphia"). Dupui told Scull of the old mine road, now used to take Delaware Valley wheat and cider to Kingston and to bring in supplies. The Philadelphia-minded Scull asked Samuel why he didn't use the Delaware River to get to market. Dupui replied simply—he didn't know where the river ran to.

SCARCELY 600 people lived in the whole county region in 1750, when settlers first started to grumble about going all the way to Morristown for court. There were no towns, not even any plantations, and in general the vast acreage had little economic importance. Morris County didn't particularly regret losing the area when the Legislature created Sussex County on June 8, 1753.

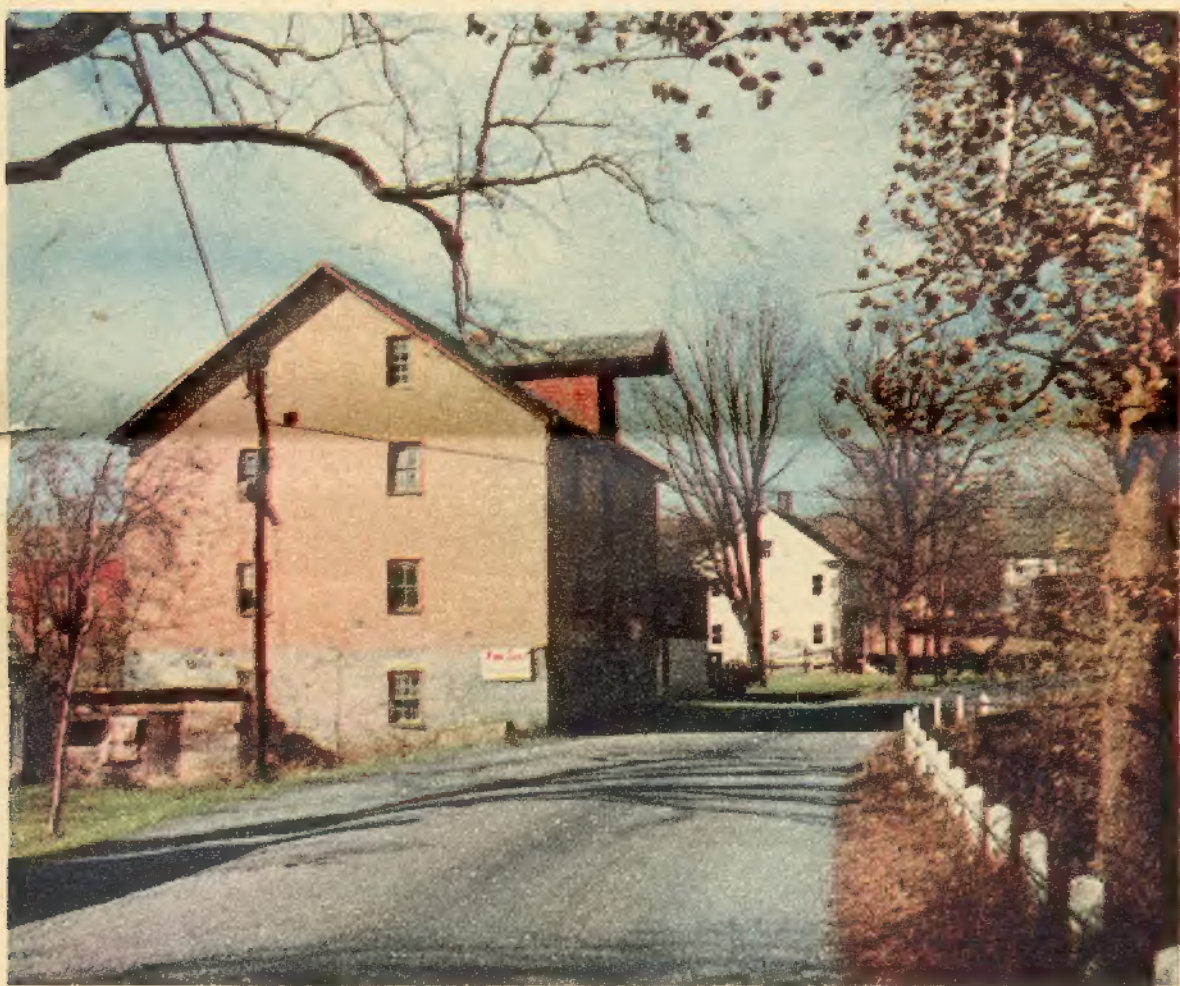
Leaders of the new county met November 20, 1753, to grant tavern licenses and to fix fees for liquor and provender. This was prophetic, since for many decades the Sussex County tavern keeper's position meant a big

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This is the nineteenth of a series of articles dealing with New Jersey's 21 counties, sketching their past and present with, now and then, a peek into their future. The counties will be considered in alphabetical order each week. Next Sunday: Union County.



The county seal as Sussex celebrates its 200th birthday and, at right, a dairy farm in Frankford Township, one of mainstays in the county's economy.



Old mill at Stillwater, built in 1840, is last of its kind in Sussex.



The New Jersey Zinc Company plant at Franklin, home of "Franklinite."



Lake Marcia and the lodge, former home of Col. Anthony R. Kuser, donor of

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boost in the climb to economic and political success.

THE following Spring county fathers levied taxes of 100 pounds annually—two-thirds of which went to pay bounties for wolves and panthers. The remaining money went to build a log gaol, a lockup so flimsy that the sheriff complained he couldn't keep prisoners in. For their part, prisoners said they wouldn't stay in the jail if the sheriff couldn't keep sheep out.

Sussex courts returned temporarily to Morristown in 1757, driven there by savage Indian uprisings along the Delaware valley. Indians who had long brooded over loss of territory in the valley struck back at white settlers in 1755. Alarmed state officials appropriated 10,000 pounds in December, 1755, to build stone forts along the river.

The most noted of the Indian killings took place near Swartwood Lake,

where in May, 1756, Anthony Swartwout, his wife and a daughter met death and two young children became Indian captives. Other killings prompted Governor Belcher to offer rewards for male Indians over 15, dead or alive. Tom Quick, an Indian killer of repute or disrepute (depending on what kind of a humane yardstick is used for measurement), single-hand-

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edly boasted of killing scores of Indians.

Fortunately wiser heads succeeded in ending the killings by getting the Indians to relinquish peacefully their territorial claims in 1758. The end of the bloody Indian struggle focused attention on another battle, the war over the New York-New Jersey borderline which raged with more or less heat for 50 years after it started in 1719. Many



the park, viewed from High Point.

beatings and shootings ensued before bistate action fixed the border at its present line in 1772.

JONATHAN HAMPTON of Essex County, a man of some influence in Trenton, shoved New Town into prominence in 1761, when the Legislature authorized the county to build a court house and jail a half-mile from Henry Hairlocker's house (on Hampton's property). Surveyors chained off the half-mile, found the location smack in the middle of a stream. A bit of chain-stretching moved the site halfway up the hill (and ever since Newton folk have wished the surveyors had really stretched the chains all the way to the hilltop).

A substantial stone court house was built in 1765 on a plot of ground conveyed to the county by Hampton for five shillings. No one questioned Hampton's public spiritedness (but few missed the fact, either, that his

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ABOVE: Spiro of Tranquility's Methodist Church, built in 1868, is county landmark.

Color photos by Dorer

RIGHT: Beef cattle (Black Angus) on farm along the Beemerville-Branchville road.



BELOW: Lake Mohawk, one of the many which make Sussex an ideal vacation spot.

Color photos by Dorer.





The old toll bridge across the Delaware at Montague and (below) piers for new crossing under construction south of Route 206.

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adjacent lands quickly jumped in value).

Days of scarcity and struggle marked Sussex from 1760 to 1775, but in the latter year the freeholders faced up to the Crown with the announcement that Sussex County no longer would pay the salaries of any Royal judge. The Revolutionary War passed Sussex County by, except for supplies which flowed from field and forge—and except for Bonnell Moody, one of the best known of all British spies. Moody hid out in a cave hidden between Big and Little Muckshaw Ponds, near Springdale, from whence he sallied out to contact British sympathizers.

The price on Moody's head rose sharply in May, 1780, when he led six men into Newton to free prisoners in the jail. "Poor Jemmy," the jailer, "trembled like a leaf" and handed over the keys. Moody threw open the doors, gave three lusty cheers for the King—and tradition says the cheers and the Indian war whoops of Moody's men frightened Newton people so badly that all of them fled the town. Moody fled, too, and most historians agree the Americans never caught up with him.

SUSSEX COUNTY'S economic position sagged during the Revolution, and assessment against it in 1781 of 8,038 pounds to help pay for the war staggered the county. The struggles of these Jersey frontiersmen so absorbed them that they scarcely noticed an influx of big landholders from 1780 to 1810. Robert Ogden became Sparta's first permanent settler in 1778 and the Ogden family worked the rich mines in Sparta Mountain. Others came to build great estates—Lewis Morris, Thomas Lawrence and John Rutherford, to mention a few.

Census figures in both 1800 and 1810 showed Sussex County second only to Essex County in population. The building of turnpikes between 1804 and 1815 helped boost the county and, after stages began to run in 1808, newcomers filtered in. The influx of new residents lifted county population to 32,754 in 1820, making Sussex first

in the state in population. True enough, Sussex then included all of Warren County—but second-ranked Essex then also included all of Union and the Paterson area of Passaic County.

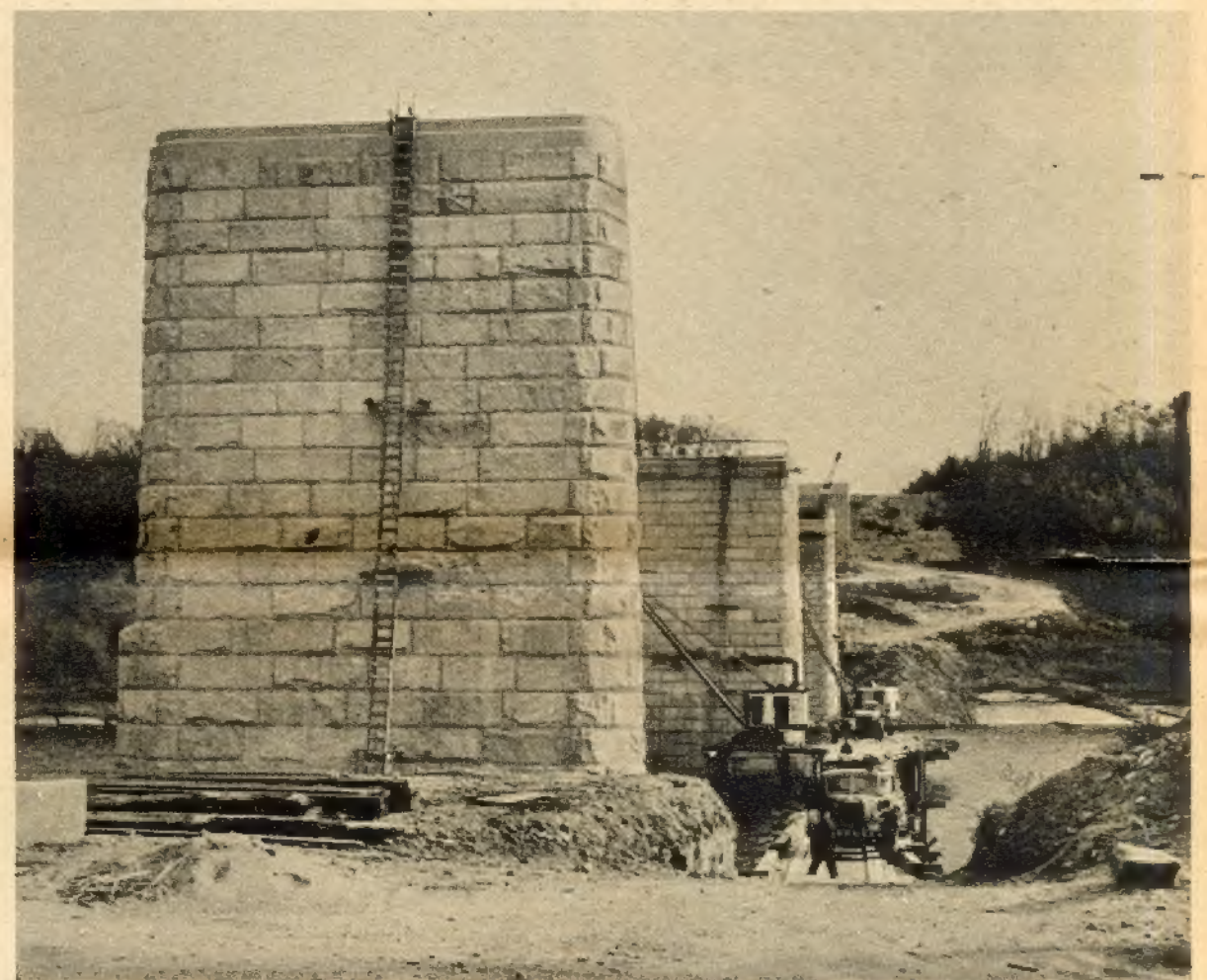
Most of Sussex County's prosperity and population centered well below Newton, however, and that region began to stir discontentedly in 1815. Defeat of an 1819 act to permit alternating courts between Oxford and Newton hastened a split; constant pressure finally caused the Legislature to cut Warren County away from Sussex in 1824. Sussex County population dropped to 20,346 in 1830 and remained stationary throughout the 19th Century.

TEMPERANCE leaders shook their heads in despair in the 1830s. An early chronicler tells of the consumption of "liquid poison," which increased "until, like the great deluge, it seemed to flood the land." Lovers of the spirits seemed especially numerous near Swartswood Lake, where three towns within a few miles of one another were known far and wide as "Gin Point," "Brandy Hook" and "Rum Corner."

William Rankin, who founded a famous private school at Deckertown (Sussex) in 1833, felt education was the answer to drinking and lawlessness. Indeed, he advertised in 1834 that after only a year of his school in Deckertown the village "now contains a goodly portion of pious and moral citizens." Be that as it may, the fact remains that Rankin's school within 20 years turned out nearly 500 graduates who went on to become school teachers elsewhere.

Rankin's school vied continuously for county leadership with the school Edward Stiles opened in 1833 at nearby Mt. Retirement. In 1844 Rankin had 76 students, Stiles 74—all private scholars. Sussex County didn't look kindly on free education; as late as 1853 a town meeting in Newton rejected the idea of raising money for free schools.

Interestingly enough, Daniel Haines of Hamburg, who became Governor of



New Jersey in 1843-44 and 1848-51, led a fight to improve the state's educational system, particularly the free schools. His success in establishing New Jersey's first normal school (plus his leadership in adoption of the new 1844 State Constitution) made his administrations outstanding.

BUILDING of the Morris Canal boomed the iron mines at Andover and gave new life to forges, such as those at Stanhope, Waterloo and Franklin Furnace. Yet, of all the ore digging, that at Franklin was most vital, because there Dr. Samuel Fowler, distinguished physician, became the first to appreciate the value of the zinc ore in the Sussex hills.

Dr. Fowler, whose medical practice spread over five counties, moved from Hamburg to "The Plains" in 1810. He built mills, shops and dwellings and called the village Franklin. Soon he recognized the zinc and interested other mineralogists in the ore he called "Franklinite."

Among other things, Dr. Fowler perfected a process in about 1830 for

making a bluish-white zinc oxide powder to use as a paint base. He took great pride in 1838 when the Federal Government used Franklin zinc in the nation's first standard set of brass weights and measures. His death in 1844 opened the mines to others, and when two companies were organized in 1848 and 1849 to exploit the mines a 50-year legal battle started.

Nevertheless, an experimental plant at Newark started to use Franklin zinc in 1852 to make zinc oxide. Shortly after the Civil War the manufacture of metallic zinc began in Newark, with the "Horse Head" and "Bertha" brands of Franklin slab zinc quickly becoming recognized as the acknowledged world zinc standards.

THE nature of Sussex agriculture underwent a radical change after the Sussex Railroad rolled into Newton in 1854. First of all, Newton became the center of farm trade. Wagons which once hauled farm produce to Chester in Orange County, N. Y., now headed for the railroad depot in Newton. Even the butter wagons which had gone



Scene, looking south from Sunrise Mountain, Stokes State Forest.

overland twice weekly to Chester stopped running.

Western competition killed markets for Sussex County beef and pork and corn and flour, but the ability of the railroads to get milk to the big city outlets changed the cattleman's emphasis from beef cattle to dairy cows. The county's first milk trains started in 1863 and as other railroads laid tracks over the county, milk depots sprang up everywhere. Railroads employed milk agents to roam the countryside, seeking new milk shippers. Dairying became the county's prime industry by Civil War time.

Sussex County paused for the war, of course, although there were plenty of people who didn't particularly relish the pause. In fact, many of the county's young men joined the "Ske-daddle Army" which marched off to Canada in May, 1862, to avoid the draft. In March, 1863, a Southern-minded assailant fired a bullet at Rev. G. W. Lloyd, pastor of Branchville Presbyterian Church and outspoken Union advocate. The bullet missed Mr. Lloyd, by the way.

The defections of the Copperheads didn't hide the fact that Sussex County had a full-sized hero in Hugh Judson Kilpatrick of Deckertown, who as a West Point cadet asked permission to leave the academy to join the troops in the field in 1861. He entered service as a lieutenant, fought throughout the war and wound up as a major general. Some years later, in 1878, he induced the Grand Army of the Republic to hold its annual encampment at Deckertown (Sussex)—with the result that 40,000 people turned out (about twice the total population of the county) and literally ground the surrounding fields into dust.

DAIRYMEN overproduced so much in the 1870s that the glutted market crashed in 1879. Outside dealers fixed the price of milk so low that Sussex

farmers revolted in 1880 and established the Milk Producers' Association under the leadership of Senator Thomas Lawrence of Hamburg. The Dairymen's League succeeded the association in 1907 and proved its power with a tempestuous 14-day strike in 1916—when farmers overturned milk wagons, battled with nonconformists and finally won their fight with dealers.

Iron mining had a brief upsurge after Scranton interests built a huge blast furnace in 1872 at Franklin Furnace. Then Thomas Edison bought the iron mining rights at Ogden mines in 1891 but after sinking \$2,500,000 into the pits he abandoned his efforts in 1898. Iron faded, but lime works in Hardyston Township moved into prominence after 1875.

Much local industry thrived in the 1880s and 1890s, such as Virgil Crisman's mill at Branchville, which in the late days of the 19th Century produced buckwheat flour, which became a household word as far away as the Western states. A shoe factory and a silk mill moved into Newton and the town of Sussex had a woolen mill and a big plow factory (where the much-respected "Sussex" and "Wantage" plows were manufactured). Generally speaking, however, industry was a local proposition, on a make-it-for-the-neighbors scale.

ZINC continued to dominate the industrial picture. Finally, borings in 1891 and 1892 showed rich zinc deposits of 800 to 1,200 feet down. Shafts reached down 1,000 feet when water flooded in. Persistently the mine owners pumped out water—800 gallons a minute, 24 hours a day, for a full year—before man beat the elements.

The richness of the new zinc deposits made settling of legal difficulties imperative, and settlement came in 1897 when the New Jersey Zinc

Co. acquired stock of three other companies with plants in New Jersey, Virginia, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. The company built a zinc refining plant at Palmerton, Pa., and Franklin's economy blossomed.

While dairymen and zinc men headed toward new prosperity, Sussex County began to realize its vacation-land possibilities at the turn of the century. Vacationists had come to Sussex as early as 1840—to Sparta, to Newton, to Culver's Lake, to Swartswood Lake. Fishermen knew the attractions of the county's streams and hunters loved its woods.

Still, it took the automobile to popularize the Sussex lakeland, with the biggest spurt taking place after World War I. By then the state had fully recognized the natural virtues of Sussex. It started to acquire acreage for the Stokes State Forest in 1907 (and now has bought 12,429 acres spread across the slopes of Kittatinny Mountain). Colonel and Mrs. Anthony R. Kuser of Bernardsville gave 11,000 acres for a state park in 1923, including High Point—1,803 feet above sea level, highest spot in New Jersey.

SUSSEX farming entered a new era in 1912 with the coming of young H. W. Gilbertson as New Jersey's first agricultural agent. Increasingly improved farm methods have made farming an \$11,500,000 enterprise in Sussex today, with about 75 per cent of that derived from dairying. Sussex County leaders insist it's a base canard to say that cows still outnumber people (although it's a definite fact that the bovines have had top rank in numbers for a long time, and if people do lead in 1953 the margin is slight).

After all, Sussex in the 1950 census had only 34,423 people living within

its borders—65 per square mile—both figures being the lowest in the state. If the price of milk would stay up, the county's humans wouldn't mind being outnumbered by cows forever.

Not that all is well in Sussex County. The word is out again that the zinc is petering out in the Franklin mines. If the zinc company goes the economic blow will be tremendous. Hoping for the best, but preparing for the worst, Franklin leaders are earnestly seeking to attract new industry to the town.

It's highly unlikely, however, that Sussex County's green hillsides will be darkened with much factory soot in the near future—if ever. The county is admittedly remote from industrial centers, as most of the world's beauty spots are. Much of the county is as wooded and as handsome as it was in the county's beginnings 200 years ago. Its streams and lakes sparkle, its woods offer peace.

COME next Summer, Sussex County will celebrate its 200th birthday, and will recall its storied past, enjoy its happy present and hope for tomorrow. Bi-centennial plans include speeches, parades, pageants and exhibitions. Nonetheless, in swiftly-moving 1953 there'll be nothing like the Centennial occasion in 1853, when Benjamin B. Edsall started to speak at noon. He called for a 15-minute recess at 2 P. M., then went on for another full hour. Not that every word wasn't fascinating ("attention riveted" on the speaker, an 1853 paper said).

But in 1953, three full hours of talking might find thoughts straying outward to the farms and lakes and the cool, green hills.

No three-hour talks for Sussex County in 1953, therefore—no one wants to curdle the cream.



Sussex County, at top of Jersey, has area of 535 square miles.